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MUSINGS OF A LAYWOMAN

E. PICTON-TURBERVILL

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Preaching

MUSINGS OF A LAYWOMAN

ON THE LIFE OF THE CHURCHES

By EDITH PICTON-TURBERVILL, O.B.E.

JOINT AUTHOR WITH CANON STREETER (FELLOW QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD) OF "WOMAN AND THE CHURCH"

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FOREWORD

THIS small book will not be read by the dignitaries of the Church; it is intended for ordinary laymen*; for it can be truly said that the destiny of the Church is in their hands.

Laymen have been indifferent to Church matters, having no real share in its affairs. If there is to be the renewal and revival of Church life to which we look, and for which we hope, laymen in numbers will need to realize the great part they must take in that renewal, for apart from them there can surely be no renewal at all.

Women with one or two exceptions seldom write on ecclesiastical or doctrinal matters, and it is more than likely that in the event of this book falling into the hands of a theologian it will be said that I have concerned myself with matters of which I have little knowledge. I shall, however, be unabashed and unrepentant, my reason

* When the word laymen is used alone—to avoid constant repetition—it includes of course laywomen.

being that though theologians have knowledge in matters which I do not possess, they fail, I think, to relate that knowledge to human life. It is here that the ordinary man and woman can supply what the theologian often lacks. Moreover, did not Canon Wilberforce utter a truth when, speaking of his ecclesiastical brethren, he said "hereditary wrong thinking has congested our mentality, theology has bewildered our understanding"?

Those who have not yet bewildered their understanding with theology will, I think, have a contribution to give in the doctrinal restatement that must eventually be made, and in the changes that will come. Some of the chapters are based upon an article I wrote in the *Nineteenth Century* in December, 1917, and one in *Contemporary Review*, January, 1918.

The internal organization of Church affairs is not dwelt upon, because the mass of lay people do not come in contact with it at all. It is, however, impossible to be a member of the Anglican Church and not come in continual touch with the matters with which the following pages are concerned.

It is surely needless to say, that there

are and have ever been, men in Holy Orders who have not only brought fresh life into the Church, but who have also struggled to make needed alterations in Church administration, in organization, and in the services of the Church. There are among our clergy—and is it not also superfluous to say it?—men belonging to every school of thought, of wide heroic thinking, of deep spiritual life, to whom the Church owes a debt for all time. They have given to mankind, each in their generation, a new hope, a wider conception of the love of God, a deeper sense of the power of spiritual life—of Christian teaching, to change conditions as well as to transform personal life, than was realized by previous generations.

The Musings of a Laywoman deal, however, with that normal everyday Church life with which ordinary people come in contact, and is it not this normal Church life that lacks inspiration and is out of touch with the need and thought of to-day?

Changes *must* come. Those in authority seem unable to move—often their hands are tied—but as often they lack both initiative and courage; laymen must move the authorities of the Church to change things. If, instead of remaining inert, indifferent

and non-expressive laymen became awake, expressive, and potent, much that is dead, hampering, and untrue in Church life and Church Services would be relegated to the past.

A time comes when what many people think must be expressed, a time when things have to be said.

If the " things " said here pain some, I plead for patience ; if, on the other hand, they awaken in laymen and women a realization of what is dead and destructive of true Church life, and to the fact that it should no longer be tolerated, if it enables them to realize that just ordinary people of goodwill can make themselves felt in Church affairs, can have a share in abolishing the unreal and in building anew, the musings of a laywoman will not have been entirely idle.

E. P-T.

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THE MUSINGS OF A LAYWOMAN

CHAPTER I

ON THE OFT-REPEATED STATEMENT THAT THE CHURCH HAS FAILED

IT is easy to say that the Church has failed, and I am not even sure what people mean when they say it. I have often noticed that men and women whose own pet schemes have not been taken up by the Church, are specially loud in their denunciation. I belong to the Church of England, and am not going to think it has failed because it did not push Mr. Jones' housing scheme reform, Mr. Smith's society for the abolition of all troublesome people, or Mrs. Hobbs' association for making everyone like herself. No, if the Church has failed I cannot help feeling quite sure it is for different reasons than those. Of course it is quite true that the confession of failure is made not only by disappointed enthusiasts, but

by many clergymen themselves. But that only makes me a little uncomfortable, because many clergymen seem so pleased with themselves for having the generosity to confess failure, that they then rest upon their oars and go no further. It seems to me that it is rather cowardly to denounce the body to which you belong and not take any real trouble to change it.

Everybody seems to be wanting something in these days, and I confess I am getting a little bit tired of the words "self-determination," "freedom," "liberty." In the end it will, I suppose, be all to the good, but of even that I am a little doubtful, unless people who are struggling for these things are able to sustain their enthusiasm, which is not easy considering all the difficulties and obstacles in their way.

Even the Church of England is touched—I fear it is only touched—with a fever, and all sorts of struggles seem to be going on within the fold. What the result will be who can tell? I am also somewhat weary of hearing it stated that the Church has failed. How often it is said! Well, I have long since learnt, that if a statement is made often enough, and with a good deal of em-

phasis, there are quite a number of people who believe it, just because they hear it again and again.

I have been wondering a great deal lately what people really mean when they say the Church has failed, because it is not clear by what standard they are judging. Clergymen when you ask them what is the standard, give quite different answers, so that it becomes rather bewildering; in the end one must, I suppose, think things out for oneself. It seems to me there is just one standard, and it is simply this, the Church is meant to interpret the mind of Christ to men and women; to represent Him to them. If therefore the Church has succeeded in that great mission it cannot be said to have failed essentially.

Has the Church done this? That is what I ask myself. Do men and women, boys and girls, when they think of the Church at once go further in their thoughts and think of Christ, of His life and of His teaching? I wish we could reply by saying, "Yes, the one inevitably leads to the other," but we know we can't, and therefore it seems to me that it is just here that the Church has failed. People somehow do not inevitably connect it with Christ or His life and

teaching. It may be questioned whether any Church has accomplished this. I do not know. My thoughts are on the Church of England to which I belong, and the more I think, the more I feel quite sure that the reason of its failure is that it has failed to interpret the mind of Christ to the ordinary man and woman. The life and teaching of the Church is not inevitably connected with the Christ.

A short time ago a vicar said somewhat impatiently that people were getting very critical about the Church, why not let it alone. I suddenly realized that what he said was quite true, people are getting dreadfully critical, but I have noticed a strange thing; whereas twenty years ago those who criticized the Church were generally indifferent in a religious sense, to-day it is the critical people who seem to care so much for eternal things and spiritual life and really to love Christ. It isn't a bit the people who are material and indifferent to Christianity who criticize, they care too little to trouble to do this; it is the finest type of young men and women I meet who are critical, and that somehow makes those who love the Church uneasy.

Many of the young people I meet are

now very little interested in the Church, but they love the Christ ideal. I have seen a good deal of both men and women who during the past four years have been through terrifying experiences, the men in the trenches and the women in munition factories. Somehow they speak much more freely than they used to do of things that really matter; they want to know more of Christian life and thought. They talk of it in a most natural manner, quite differently from many "religious" people, who often have a special voice when they speak of religious things, and who are only able to speak of them at special times and in certain places. I have spent a number of years in India, and though I am no authority on Hinduism, I know that Hindus look upon the religious life as a quite normal and everyday subject of conversation, and in that way many of our younger generation resemble them. Perhaps if we all had a little Hinduism in our religious life we would be better Christians.

I do not think anyone would say that the Church has during the past five years been a power in the country. When people were perplexed and wanted some guiding, I do not think in any single difficulty it gave a

definite lead in Christian thought—yet Christianity in the end does solve difficulties. One cannot help wondering whether the Church which is so often speaking of its own failure will really do much to make things better. The Archbishop of Canterbury has many committees at work, but it does appear to me that the sort of reforms they suggest are rather trivial and cannot really help. The whole difficulty lies so deep down, and committees do not seem to understand this. They appear to care about and spend time over, such little things, things that ordinary people are quite sure do not really matter. Sometimes I think it would be a wonderful thing for the Church, if all the dignitaries would resign in a body for a certain time, and hand over the question of reforms to a picked body of lay men and women. They care for the bigger side of the whole difficult question much more than the Church authorities seem to do.

I have noticed lately that when the failure of the Church has been spoken of ecclesiastical dignitaries have been saying very emphatically "but the laity *are* the Church," which is, I suppose, quite true; it is said, however, in a tone which implies

that the laity are responsible for the present state of affairs. This does not seem to me to be "playing the game," for though technically it may be true—and surely is true that the laity are the Church—yet, as everyone knows, they have never been allowed any share in the affairs of the Church, which has been governed by what is called the "hierarchical ministry." Now that things have come almost to an impasse, it surely isn't quite fair to turn to laymen and laywomen who have never been allowed any say in Church matters, and cry in a tone that implies they are to blame. "But you are the Church!" If when the ecclesiastical dignitaries say it, they mean that the laity shall now take matters into its own hands, it sounds an audacious thing to say, but things would, I believe, become much better. No doubt we are to blame for having been indifferent to Church affairs. There is, however, a stirring of the waters. It may be true the Church has failed, it is true the laity have been permitted no power, but I see change coming, and lay men and women with the love of God in their hearts may have a great work to do within the Church.

CHAPTER II

ON FELLOWSHIP

FEW people are historians, but the small amount of history that most of us know, shows us that men have always been prepared to sacrifice their lives for the cause of freedom. The reason being, I suppose, that there *is* no real life apart from it; this passion for freedom can surely not pass away so long as spiritual life holds sway in the heart of man. This love for freedom seems to have a more general hold on people to-day than it has ever had in the past—few are untouched by the passion for freedom—and alongside with it another desire is, I find, surging up in the hearts of all sorts of people with whom I come in contact.

It is a passion for fellowship.

I have been wondering if men and women could be found willing to sacrifice their lives for fellowship as they have done for freedom. It is, of course, difficult to imagine circumstances that could call for such a

sacrifice, for fellowship is not a thing for which you can fight, the very thought of it precludes the possibility of antagonistic feelings.

People are, however, beginning to realize more fully that fellowship, like freedom, leads to a larger life. Ever so small a knowledge of life teaches us that the achievement of any ideal calls for sacrifice, and then comes a paradox, for when the ideal has been reached there is no sacrifice at all. It is not quite easy to put these things into words, but is it not likely that the Church is now being called to make what will appear to be a great sacrifice for the sake of fellowship ?

I will try to make it clear why I cannot get away from this thought.

Our Church has, it appears to me, set up two great barriers which positively prevents fellowship with many true Christ-loving and Christ-living men and women. One is, I think, its insistence upon what is called dogma, and the other its teaching and attitude on the subject of the Episcopacy and the priesthood.

I feel I am going into very deep waters, and will very easily lay myself open to the scorn of men who know a great deal about

theology. But I don't think I am going to mind that. Specialists are so often wrong. I remember once going to a play, which showed how in days gone by experts in the shipping world, scoffed at the idea of any ships being built of iron; it could not be done, those who said so were experts, they had mastered the subject, they knew the thing was impossible, and when a young whipper-snapper who had no expert knowledge began babbling of iron ships he was snuffed out and made to feel he was talking nonsense. The experts, however, were wrong; iron ships were built, iron ships did float, and they rendered great service to mankind.

So sometimes the ordinary person who is not an expert may be right.

Taking courage then in both hands I will put on paper my musings on the subject of the great barriers which the Church sets up against the spiritual craving for fellowship that so marks the present age.

It is not easy exactly to know what dogma is; I am quite sure it is not the same thing as doctrine, and I have come to the conclusion that the difference between the two is something like this. Doctrine it appears to me is an attempt to put in words what

we believe to be the truth ; the mere statement that God IS, is a doctrine, and it does not appear possible for anyone who thinks at all to be free from doctrine. Dogma is different. An authority makes a definition of a truth in a set form of words, and then says to the seeking soul, " Unless you agree to this phrasing, this formula, you cannot belong to us." And as a matter of fact few people really think that those who can agree to certain set forms of words are Christians, and those who cannot are therefore outside the fold. Dogma becomes cruel.

Truth is Infinite ; with that statement everyone would agree ; then *can* it be possible to express it in finite words ?

Surely not.

Perhaps a concrete example will help.

I believe in the Atonement. That is, I believe that through the life and death of Christ man draws near to God, is made at one with Him. That is a doctrine which I hold, and for me there is no life apart from such a faith. But if an authority insists on making me express in words the *manner* in which the at-one-ment is achieved, the mode by which I draw near, it would be a dogma, and I am sure that every sentence the authority put before me to express it

would be inadequate and I should be able to subscribe to none of them.

The reason being, it appears to me, just this. Words of any language are inadequate to express Divine Truths. They are not sufficiently fine, subtle, or deep to do so. The shimmering tones of a violin, the harmonies of music, the combination of colour—as in a sunset—the *spirit* of a man, can often express truth more adequately than the spoken or written word. Language cannot surely be the sole means of Truth expression, yet theologically we treat it as though it were. It cannot, I think, be too often said that words are inadequate, when an attempt is made to express by them the things of God. Moreover, the attempt to do so can always be stopped by somebody insisting on definitions of the words that must be used. Does not all that is most precious in life elude definition? Such Divine truths as are expressed by the words, immortality, life, love, defy definition, they transcend all power of expression in words. The meaning of them can only be apprehended, definitions are really not needed, those that apprehend KNOW. Words lead us up to a certain point, but in the Holy of Holies they cannot enter.

It saddens me that the Church still insists on men being compelled to accept *statements* of Truth before taking Holy Orders or entering the Mission Field. The wording of these statements is often meaningless to people of to-day, there is little real force in them. Yet men must subscribe to them if they would minister within the Church. What then is the result ?

Very often it must mean, I think, that the men who love truth, who have deep spiritual insight, turn away ; the Church loses from its service the best, those who refuse to think dishonestly.

Of course this does not imply that those who are ordained must necessarily think dishonestly, but it does seem quite clear that often many of the truest thinkers and most honest Christian men must refuse to enter the ministry of the Church.

Nor is that the only result ; the insistence that an authoritative statement of truth be accepted checks the growth of that fellowship which is making itself felt, which could, and I believe through faith in God *will*, become one of the most regenerative forces in the whole wide world.

CHAPTER III

ON A DREAM

I MUST continue on the same subject, for so much more concerning it comes pouring into my mind. Moreover, last night I had a dream that touched upon it and the dream was a beautiful one.

The scene was by the side of a lake and I could tell at once by the garments the people wore that it was 2000 years ago. The Master was there, and in my dream He appeared exactly like the traditional pictures of Him which we know so well. Many were around Him, but His thoughts and attention seemed concentrated upon a young man and woman who stood before Him. It was most strange, for this young man and woman were quite different from all the others standing by. The man was clothed as a young athlete of to-day, strong, eager, a splendid specimen of modern manhood. Some years ago I was at Princeton when in memory of the genesis of the Student Movement a statue was unveiled of an

athletic youth. The young man in my dream was just like that statue; the woman, too, was of to-day, her face was full of eager desire for service, so strongly tremulous with love, that though I realized she was of the stamp I often meet in everyday life I did not notice how she was clothed.

They were offering eagerly to follow Him, serve Him, and be His messengers. That was clear, and those who stood by leant forward to catch the words as they fell from the Master's lips.

He spoke so softly that it was not easy to catch all He said, but I caught such words like these, "Have faith in God," "Believe in me," "Love all men," "Become as little children," "Love one another," "By this shall all men know ye are My disciples." What more He said I did not hear, but after a little while an added light of happiness came on the faces of the young man and woman, and when later the crowds silently slipped away, I saw them both with lithe and cheerful steps following the Master as He went up the hill slope, on the side of the lake where we had been standing.

The dream quickly passed, but when I woke my thoughts dwelt upon it for a long time. I thought of the way He received

those two, and the words He spoke when they offered themselves to Him, and then of the way our Church receives those who also would minister to Him.

I *could* not think of Christ saying to those who offer their services as His messengers, "What do you believe about the Incarnation, the Atonement? Explain the Atonement. And tell me, do you believe in my Virgin Birth?"

No, no, He could not. Why then must His Church ask these questions?

He seemed to trust in something so much stronger than statements of Truth. I know now what it was; simply Love, faith in God, and the Spirit of Truth. The more I think about it the more I feel that it was there He put His trust; because Faith, Love, and Truth alone will build up spiritual life, alone stand all tests and convert a world. It is strange that we have not the faith to put our trust where He did, in the unseen; we have not faith to trust *that which alone can be trusted*—Love and the Spirit of Truth. We try all sorts of other tests, and so men and women full of the vigour of youth, of love and the desire to serve, like those I saw in my dream, turn from the Church though they follow the Master.

Do we really trust the God Who is invisible ?

I am afraid we nearly always say it is too vague when it comes to the point, and so we refuse to trust what alone can be trusted, Love and the Spirit of Truth. When in my dream the Master led those two away, it was clear that He was trusting to an invisible Spirit within them.

Of course many people will say that there must be some intellectual tests for those who would enter the ministry of the Church. Yes, some perhaps, but it seems to me that they must not—if the Church wishes to be like Christ—come first. Ought not the first test to be the one used by the Master ? And perhaps it is just here that a call may be coming to our Church—really to believe more in the power of the Spirit, not to worry about orthodoxy as generally understood. It is, after all, only those who are utterly faithful to the prompting of the Spirit that are really orthodox. Many of us who think we are orthodox are not truly so. Orthodoxy means " true thinking." Have we not at last learnt that a man can only be sure of true teaching when he entirely trusts the Spirit ?

I may be wrong, though I do not think I

am, and we must all say what we think. Quite a number of people, it is true, believe that if the Church abandoned some of her many tests for those who would enter the ministry there would be a kind of chaos, but is not that want of faith? What must happen, I think, if we trust more to the Spirit is that, rather perhaps to our surprise we shall find more order, find ourselves nearer to each other than ever before, and the fellowship of which I have been thinking will come in as a flood.

What should make us happy is the thought that *if* this great barrier of dogma to true fellowship is to be broken down, it is the Spirit of God Who alone can do it.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE EPISCOPATE

TO allow oneself to muse, and then to write down on paper the result of one's meditations, on so great a subject as the Episcopate, does require courage ; moreover, even as I write I wonder whether anything further can be said upon the subject that will be either useful or helpful. I am encouraged, however, by the thought that there are a number of people who perhaps, being usually indifferent to such matters, may care to know the thoughts of a laywoman on a subject that has hitherto been spoken and written of mainly by theologians. It is not so very long ago that men believed in the Divine Right of Kings. Those of the present generation marvel how such a faith could have been held, considering the many infamous deeds committed by many infamous Kings, yet I have come to the conclusion that this clinging to a theory in direct contradiction to facts is very dear to the human soul, and that it abides

with us still. I do not know if anyone would use the same phrase with regard to episcopacy, and confess faith in the Divine Right of the Episcopate—and yet it seems to me that quite a good deal of Church teaching is not very far from it.

I mentioned in my last chapter two great barriers checking the passion for fellowship that is surging up in the hearts of the present generation. The Church's present attitude on the subject of the Episcopate and the priesthood is, I feel sure, the second barrier to fellowship. It is always easy to think that those who do not agree with you must be wrong, and I am sure that the older one grows the more carefully we must guard against this line of thought ; because in spite of what is so often said about the " cocksureness " of youth, it is, I notice, a vice that is very often apt to increase with age. But I do not think that men and women are yielding to that vice, when they confess it has always been very hard for them to understand how people can *really* believe that if there were no Bishops there would actually be no Church. That Bishops are absolutely necessary to the Church's existence.

It is an interesting occupation sometimes

to reflect upon what would be the result if an obviously impossible event took place. For instance, supposing the bench of Bishops disappeared one day, or perished in one fell swoop, would there be no Church?

There are those who would insist that in such an event the Church would cease to exist. The foundation on which they build the belief that Bishops are absolutely essential to the existence of the Church must be in the theory that a certain grace of God—called, I think, the grace of orders—can be passed on to others through them only, and that therefore if there were no Bishops this grace would cease to operate. This is, I think, the root of the matter.

Someone was saying to me a little while ago that in his opinion the Church has lost weight with the present generation because the young people of to-day have an uncomfortable sense that the Church is not quite honest in its thinking. The statement appears to me to be a true one; I am quite sure that dishonest thinking is often at the root of many anomalies and much division. Does any of it creep into the Church's teaching about the Episcopate?

Do men really believe that no Church would exist if by some catastrophe all Bishops perished? Do they really believe that Bishops alone have the power to pass on certain gifts from God? It may be that some do believe this, but if so is it wrong to think that in some cases at least the belief is clung to, for fear of *what would happen to the Church if the belief was abandoned?* I am quite sure this fear very often makes men force themselves to believe things; a fear of what would happen if a certain belief were not held often makes them cling to it. Everyone dislikes a loss of power, and I sometimes wonder if it is wrong to think that without exactly knowing it the teachers in our Church are ready to believe certain teaching on episcopacy, because the Church would lose a certain power if it did not. I was reading Dr. Lightfoot's *Christian Ministry* the other day because I was anxious to understand this question a little. Dr. Lightfoot's scholarship is recognized by men of all ways of thinking.

He says clearly that when the Apostles were living there were no bishops as a separate order at all, there were presbyters and deacons. Those who say that a certain grace can come only through Bishops

build this faith on the belief that Bishops were formed out of the Apostolic order and have continued to this present day in unbroken line; that the grace was given by Christ to the Apostles and direct by the Apostles to the Bishops down to to-day. It seems to depend upon whether or not the Apostles passed on the grace direct to the Bishops.* Lightfoot tells us Bishops were *not* formed from the Apostolic order by delegation, but were formed later by the presbyters by elevation. So it seems as though the theory of special grace being transmitted by the Episcopate falls to the ground. Can it be that our ecclesiastical dignitaries are many of them aware of this, but hesitate to admit it for fear of certain consequences not, of course, to themselves personally, but to the Church? A fear that order would be at an end, that chaos would ensue, that the Church would suffer in countless ways, if belief in special grace being transmitted by the Episcopate were abandoned. If we were Bishops we would most of us, I am sure, value the feeling that a power was given us that other people did not possess. We

* Of course the title "episcopos" is often used in the New Testament, but the titles presbyter and bishop were interchangeable; a bishop was a presbyter chosen to be an overseer. See Acts xx, 17–28. Titus i, 5–7.

would rejoice in the knowledge that by laying hands on another, special grace would be passed on to him by the act ; but if the foundation on which we rested our belief in this power was found to be insecure would it be honest to continue in our line of thinking ?

It will, of course, be said that Dr. Lightfoot was not infallible, that he may be wrong. But has any scholar ever shown his research in this matter to be faulty ? I believe not. History, however, is not, of course, the final test of truth, there are other tests of which we will think later.

I am quite sure that a bishop with prayer in his heart and faith in his soul—one who has dedicated his life to God—*can* by the laying on of hands pass on a blessing and a grace ; but the difficulty arises when it is claimed that he and his order alone can do so to the exclusion of other men of faith and prayer, whose lives also are dedicated to God.

Does this belief stand the test of history ?

It appears not. And I for one ever remember with thankfulness that one of the first men in the early Church to lay his hands on another was an ordinary man,

"a certain disciple," Ananias. He laid his hands on Paul, who received the Holy Ghost and whose eyes were opened.

And Ananias was not an Apostle.

CHAPTER V

ON BISHOPS

NOW and again we all come across people who are entirely devoid of the historic sense; estimable though they may be they certainly are very trying in conversation. Historic events that do not fit in with their theories are entirely ignored and any appeal to history swept aside. I was talking to such an one to-day, and after a feeling of some impatience began to wonder if it was a reaction from the blind following of tradition. I don't know. What I said in my last chapter has made me think about it.

I do not believe anyone with a glimmer even of the historic sense wishes the Episcopate to perish! It is an order in our Church though it may not be absolutely vital to it, but just because it is at the root of nearly all our divisions, thoughts concerning it should—must, I think—be vitally altered if peace is to come, but that does not mean that anyone would wish the order to cease.

The whole trouble, it appears to me, is the teaching given concerning it ; for if Church teaching on this subject were not founded on the theory of special and exclusive grace transmitted by the Episcopate, there would be no objection, as far as I can see, to members of other Churches joining us in Holy Communion. The refusal to permit this has occurred again and again—even on the battlefield, in the immediate presence of death. That this should be possible is a shock to the highest feelings of every man and woman. I do not *think* the chaplains on the battlefield who withheld the Sacrament from dying men wishing to partake of it received any rebuke from their ecclesiastical superiors, but I hope I am wrong. Though the fact that it occurred was made public, there was no public rebuke from an ecclesiastical authority of the mental attitude that dictated so cruel an action. There is no doubt that those who are unconfirmed are still not generally welcomed at our Holy Communion. It is often asked why they should wish to communicate in any Church but their own ? And the reply to that is, because of the growing passion men and women now have for fuller fellowship one with another. This, I am sure, must be

reckoned with, and if facilities for the expression of this fellowship are not encouraged by the Church, expression will nevertheless be found, though it may be in a manner not in harmony with the authoritative teaching of the Church. I have been to many conferences of Free Church people and Anglicans where for days we have met together in prayer and fellowship, but at the Lord's table we are always separated, very often not because the majority wish separation, but because of a determined minority who get their way, having the force—which is a powerful one—of custom and tradition behind them. No one would wish them to join in a united service in violence to their feelings, but the point is that such a service of fellowship has always been discouraged by those in authority, and an announcement made that each man and woman should only communicate in his own Church, which practically amounted to a prohibition to those who would have gladly joined in the fellowship of a corporate Communion. No amount of logic will convince me that this is right. I have heard the reasons for the necessity of communicating separately stated by numbers of Churchmen well fitted to put

the case in its most cogent form. It leaves me cold, as I am sure it does nine-tenths of the laity; not only does it leave me cold but with the uncomfortable feeling that what is logical is often diabolical. Nor does the argument often used, that as you must conform to the rules of a club before availing yourself of its privileges, so you must conform to the rules of the Church before claiming its privileges, leave any strong impression.

Many minds, I find, cannot accept such a comparison, for ought not the Church to be guided by the laws of God rather than by the rules of a club?

At the root of this exclusion of the unconfirmed lies, I suppose, the thought that not having had Episcopal hands laid upon them, the unconfirmed are not in a sufficient state of grace to receive the benefits bestowed. The question to be faced is, do we really believe this? Do even the Bishops really believe it? If they did, how is it that without any remonstrance they administer the Sacrament to many (in high social circles), belonging to the established Church of Scotland, who have never been confirmed?

A year or so ago I saw a great deal of our

women and girls in the munition factories. I happened to have some interest in a large hostel to which a beautiful chapel had been attached. It had been built by private gifts, and the order of service was arranged by those—laywomen—who had charge of the hostel. Girls in the hostel belonged to both the Anglican and Free Churches, and some to no Church at all. Services were arranged, an Anglican clergyman being invited to conduct them on Sundays in turn with a Free Churchman.

To the astonishment of those in charge the Anglican clergyman insisted that there should be Communion rails, behind which he alone should stand, and that the barrier should be closed when the Free Church minister officiated, he standing outside the rail. The laywomen, who both of them were women of spiritual insight, could not see the point; they were friendly, but the assumption of superiority seemed to them preposterous; they refused to consent to such an arrangement, and another clergyman had to be found to conduct the services.

A beautiful chalice had been given to the chapel, and here again a difficulty arose. The clergyman *could* not reconcile his Church conscience to using the chalice if it was also

used by the Free Church minister. He would bring his own. Very gently those in charge gave him to understand he was invited to come by them, and they could not permit so deep an insult to be offered the Free Church minister and those who communicated at his service as the refusal to use the same cup implied.

The clergyman yielded, being very anxious to hold Anglican services in the chapel, but to salve his Church conscience he had to resort to a strange device.

He explained he would regard the circumstances as extreme, as though he were in a dug-out or on the field of battle, where all could not be arranged in accordance with Church teaching. So quite solemnly in a perfectly safe place on a peaceful Sabbath day in England it was pretended that the circumstances were extreme, that he was administering more or less under shot and shell and therefore had to use the means that were at hand ; with this little pretence he seemed to salve his conscience. If one's beliefs are subject to such subterfuges as these, is it wrong to wonder whether it is worth while holding them at all ?

I am told by a good Churchman that the clergyman's action can be explained, which

is doubtless true. When men, however, act in such a way that continuous explanation is needed it is, to say the least of it, unwise. Though an Anglican I am persuaded that the Free Church minister's service was as efficacious as the clergyman's. Moreover, it would, I believe, strengthen the spiritual life of the Church if in cases where a clergyman is not available, and there is a company of faithful people it were made possible for a layman to administer the Sacrament.

I have travelled in many parts of the world and sometimes been in remote isolated places, and it has always seemed to me quite lamentable that, where there is so much to deaden, so little to quicken spiritual life, the Church does not make it possible for a layman to administer the Sacrament of the Holy Communion as under special circumstances a layman may administer the Sacrament of Baptism.

The reason for not permitting this lies in the fact that hands have not been laid upon a layman in ordination. Hands, however, have been laid upon him in confirmation, and by the teaching of the Church the Holy Spirit has thereby been received. The ordinary person would have thought—

and I know I madden my ecclesiastical friends by allowing what the ordinary person says on this subject to have any weight, but it *does* have weight, which, I think, daily increases—that such an one might in special cases be permitted to administer the Sacrament. The more I think on these subjects the more it seems clear that views held on the subject of the Episcopate are at the root of much that makes for a non-spiritual life and for divisions.

When ecclesiastical dignitaries make a platform appeal for unity the whole thing seems, in view of all this, unreal, for it is their attitude that creates the division. There is no theological writer to whom I personally owe a deeper debt of gratitude than Bishop Westcott. He has taught me nearly all I know, and another religious writer to whom I owe an almost equal debt of gratitude is the author of "Pro Christo et Ecclesia." I remember now the revelation that came to me—I think I may call it that—on realizing what Westcott points out, that the great commission given by Christ on that first wonderful Easter evening, "As my Father hath sent Me even so send I you—receive ye the Holy Ghost, whosesoever sins ye remit they are

remitted unto them and whosesoever sins ye retain they are retained," was spoken not to the Apostles alone, but to the whole Church, including the women and children; they were all gathered together for fear of the Jews.

When St. Luke's account is compared with St. John's this becomes quite clear, and I cannot but feel that it was possibly the wish being father to the thought that led the Church to any other conclusion.

There may be an isolated Churchman here and there who will challenge Westcott's statement, but scholars generally accept it. Indeed, I think the proof must be nigh overwhelming, for the Lambeth Conference on Absolution and Confession in 1901 came unanimously to the same conclusion; this conclusion would surely not have been arrived at by an ecclesiastical body, had the evidence not been overwhelming.

Of course, teachers in the Church have quite genuinely believed that these words were spoken to the apostles alone, it had been asserted unchallenged so often; it is I suppose, only original thinkers like Westcott who have courage to challenge a generally accepted statement. But I also have a shrewd suspicion that it was very

pleasing to mediæval priests to think the words were spoken to the Apostles alone and through them to the priesthood, thus giving them a special power withheld from others. It is wonderful how willing human nature is to believe what it wants to believe.

CHAPTER VI

ON A DILEMMA

MY reading on ecclesiastical affairs is, I admit, somewhat scrappy, and I seldom can say exactly where I gathered this or that bit of information.

Two statements, however, made by the same individual remain clearly in my mind, and ever since I heard of them I have been trying to reconcile them. A claim was made by a clergyman that in the Church the Holy Spirit spoke through the Episcopate. The Bishops, he asserted, were the vehicle of the Holy Spirit, and through them as a corporate body He speaks; this belief is held by many people. Whether I agree with it or not, the point of view is quite understandable; it rests on the belief in special Apostolic grace of which I have already spoken, and the position taken is quite clear. But the same man who announced his belief in the special guidance given to the Episcopate also maintained that in no matters touching Church life,

thought, or progress was it possible for the Bishops to lead! They were not to lead, but to follow where the laity led.

The situation then is a curious one.

The Bishops are the vehicles of the Spirit; it is they who have special guidance, but—and here the extraordinary inconsistency of the position emerges—it is those who are *not* specially so guided, who have no special gift of the Spirit, who are to lead, while those who claim to have a special gift are to follow those who are without it.

Is there not something Gilbertian in the situation? Men claiming special guidance of the Spirit which is withheld from others, and at the same time saying they cannot lead, but must follow those others who are without the guidance they possess.

It is, I think, only the conviction that the claim of being the vehicle of the Holy Spirit though made is not believed in, that saves the situation from a comic element, and makes it comprehensible.

It is as though a small company of men offered to guide a multitude through a trackless desert, on the ground that they had special knowledge and knew the path. But when a difficulty arose or the path was lost they turned to the multitude

assuring them that they were the leaders and the company would follow, yet when the multitude found the path for the company to continue the assertion that they alone had special knowledge of the way !

It is the claim to special grace and *then* the refusal to lead that puzzles the ordinary person who has no casuistry at his command. If the position were authoritatively accepted that the laity and not the Bishops are the Church, the refusal of the Bishops to lead would be easily understood. The position would be as a writer in the *Times* quite recently said, quoting Dr. Lightfoot, that " the laity are the Church and the ministers are but their delegates, servants, and mouthpieces."

Are we not on the horns of a dilemma ?

If the Bishops are the vehicle of the Holy Spirit in the Church, then clearly they *must* lead in Church life, thought, and progress, and not look to the laity to lead, for if under these conditions they look to the laity to lead it would mean that those who have special Divine guidance would be following those who have not, an obviously impossible situation. Is it not impossible for Bishops even as a corporate body to claim special guidance and then

refuse to lead? If the Bishops are the Church, they should not dare to evade the responsibility of leadership; if, on the other hand, the laity are the Church, as Dr. Lightfoot has said, and as many ecclesiastical dignitaries are now saying, then the laity should be given some power to lead, and not be labelled disloyal Churchmen if in some cases they desire to do so.

CHAPTER VII

ON PRIESTS

MY Greek is rusty, it never was up to much. I can read the gospels with fair accuracy and stumble—but it *is* stumbling—through the epistles. I comfort myself, however, with the knowledge that although a mere laywoman, I have come in contact with clergy who know even less! The saying, "a little learning is a dangerous thing," is, I think, just one of those proverbs—and there are many such—which says just the opposite of what is true. A little learning is to my mind a most useful thing if you bear in mind that it *is* little. A little learning is useful and safeguarding rather than dangerous, in that it protects the layman—and I use that word in its widest sense—from the complete domination of experts who often have theories to defend.

The only words used in the New Testament for those set apart to minister in the Church are deacon (*διάκονος*, used for both

men and women), presbyter (πρεσβύτερος) and bishop or overseer (ἐπίσκοπος). Deacon is a minister, St. Paul uses the word to describe himself, 1 Cor. III, 5. He uses it to describe Phœbe, Romans XVI, 1. It was not an office filled by men only. πρεσβύτερος means simply an elder; we read of the elders often in the Acts of the Apostles, they appear to have been overseers of the Church. ἐπίσκοπος was also an overseer. The word used for priest, ἱερεύς, has a totally different sense; it means the *sacrificing* priest, who in the Old Testament is very familiar to us, a sacrificing priest being one who stands between God and man.

It is, I think, a very striking fact that the word ἱερεύς, which means a sacrificing priest, is never *once* used in the New Testament of those who were ministers of the Gospel. The Apostles are *never* spoken of as priests: is the word anywhere used of an ordained minister? The words deacon, presbyter, overseer, which do not even suggest the thought of sacrificial work, are always used, when referring to those who were the ministers of the early organized Church. And perhaps one may feel glad that this is so, for it brings with it the inspiring

thought that the real priesthood is that which belongs to the Christian brotherhood. The deacons, presbyters and overseers seem to have recognized this in a beautiful way and claimed no sacerdotal functions or privileges whatever; it seems to me that the true Christian minister is only sacerdotal in that he is prepared to offer up himself for the service of mankind? It is clear that sacerdotal claims in the priestly sense were never made by the Apostles or even by the apostolic fathers. It appears that it was only in the third century that the idea of the sacrificing priest within the Christian Church fully emerged in place of the simple—and what seems the more Christ-like and Christian thought of an overseer.

How did this come about?

I wonder if I am quite wrong in thinking that as long as a man has spiritual power, as long as a Church is a living organism, it is not necessary to claim an external power. That it is only when that first fine passion of love passes away external power is needed in order to maintain discipline. It appears that this is just what did happen in the third century. Spiritual power in the Church in about the third century seems to

have declined, and with that decline came the claim for certain powers of office. For nearly two hundred years the Church had flourished, and had triumphed over paganism, yet by then it was not entirely untouched by pagan thought. The priest, ἱερεύς, appears and makes claims that no Apostle ever made. There are men and women whom I meet—not many—with such real spiritual power within that no amount of laying on of hands or sacerdotal claims could possibly enhance it. And it does seem that the spirit of the priestly claim is either pagan or Jewish. I have seen another form of it in Hinduism, and everywhere over the world the idea of a sacrificing priest seems to me to be the enemy of *true* religion. It is sad reading in history whether it is Old Testament history or mediæval English history to find that the priests are so often the enemies of the really spiritual. An irony of fate, indeed, for they are the very ones who claim a special gift of grace withheld from other men.

So far as I can see the claim that Bishops and priests have an especial and exclusive spiritual gift which they can pass

on to others in one form or another is not founded on the New Testament, nor on early Christian teaching. Yet the thought has come to me that after all it would be sad for the world, if everything was decided by looking back into the past alone; the Holy Spirit guides us still and things can be tried by stronger tests than by historical "proof." Is it not the case that facts of life often prove more one way or another than an appeal to history, and that the facts of life do often give the lie to many theories built on what appears to be history?

If therefore the facts of life showed that those whom the Church insists have special spiritual gifts, were more Christ-like and more filled with the Spirit of God than other men, then I am quite sure that even in the face of past history we ought to accept Church teaching on this subject.

But do the facts of life teach this?

Most people would, I suppose, admit that the man who has most of the Spirit of God is he who is selfless, full of love for the human race and all living things, tender in his judgments, who lives a self-sacrificing life—and who is, in short, a *Christ-living* man. Now if the theory be true that those who

are ordained have special spiritual gifts, the men who would *en masse* live this life to a marked degree would be those who have been ordained.

The war has not, I think, taught us new things altogether. But it seems to have thrown certain facts of life into high relief, and one great fact it has revealed has been that men on the battlefield have seen that just normal human beings like themselves have shown as much love, as much self-sacrifice, tender compassion, and Christ-likeness as those who were ordained; they have seen—as indeed we all have—that although there have been splendid exceptions—the "priesthood" have not as a body shown these Christian virtues more than other men.

It is all very puzzling, for if the ordained men have really special grace it ought, one would have thought, to be very clearly seen, the facts of life should bear it out, and yet they do not appear to do this. The world sees no difference *en masse* between them and ordinary non-ordained Christian men. Magnificent exceptions there are as in all walks of life—but in the main the difference is not apparent.

I can well imagine a candid friend or reader, thinking if this is true it leads to the conclusion that what is proved to be untrue both by history and by the facts of life is being taught by the Church; and further does it not also lead to the mournful conclusion that thousands of good men—ordained priests—are lending themselves to what if one is quite honest must be described at the best as a pious fraud? And here the apparent difficulty comes in, for, of course, I do not mean that.

There are, undoubtedly, some who are dishonest, who do not believe what they say, and it is because of this that they have nothing to give to their flock. They are, I think, few in numbers. There are, however, many who appear to let their attitude and actions be guided by one set of principles, mainly traditional ones, but who are really thinking and feeling on quite different principles. It may be that they cannot help themselves. I don't know.

But—and here I confess we come to a very big but—I do think we must recognize that up till now, all down the ages, it has

been the ordained priesthood who within the Church have interpreted to the masses the teaching of Christ. For centuries and centuries people have been content that it should be so—are content now to a very large extent. In bygone ages it was to the interest of the Church that its priests should claim a special power, and it is impossible to read history without being quite sure that this Church interest very often came first in their teaching, and prevented them from presenting the free and simple truth. The power of the priesthood and the exaltation of the organized Church was taught so emphatically and for so long that at last it did, I think, come to be accepted as quite *genuine* by the succeeding generations of those in the priesthood, and is accepted quite genuinely —so strong is the force of a continually repeated teaching—by a large number now.

Is not that a possible explanation of the fact that quite a number of ecclesiastical authorities cling to a position that history probably, and the teaching of life certainly, shows to be unsound? If laymen and laywomen come forward in large numbers to *help* the theologians, the Bishops, the priests

to think these things out afresh it would, I think, be all to the good. For quite frankly they need the help of ordinary lay people—for though ecclesiastical authorities may be more learned, it seems to me that they have a heritage to battle against that is not a happy one.

CHAPTER VIII

ON TRANSMIGRATION, AND OF A FAITH IN MANKIND

A FRIEND having read what I have written thus far has just thrown down the manuscript and somewhat impatiently said, " Of course if your thoughts were followed to their logical conclusion the Church would die."

This is strange and troubles me, because what I want and long for is exactly the opposite, a far deeper and more living Church life than exists at present. Besides, it is quite impossible to think of death. I am in Epping Forest. Spring is being softly heralded in, new life, abundant life throbs in the air. There is no death. But even if there were, *would* it mean death to the Church, as my friend says, if what appear to be two barriers to a greater fellowship within the human race were withdrawn ? That is, if the authoritative Church teaching and attitude on the subjects of dogma, the

Episcopacy and the priesthood were modified.

It occurred to me the other day that a little Eastern thought might help our Christianity. Transmigration, the passing from one form of life into another, is taught by the Hindus. If in this life you have fulfilled your destiny you pass at what we call death into a higher form of life, more perfect, more beautiful; the analogy must, of course, not be pushed too far.

It would, I think, be like that with the Church. If it had faith to let go what *appears* to be but is not really, I think, its life, it would not mean death, but the passing into a much richer and fuller life, and many men and women, true Christians, would be able to feel themselves a part of the Church who just now are silently slipping away from it.

I wonder if we can blame them for doing this. The argument is very often used—Why not come in and help rather than slip away? But can a man for long conscientiously give his heart to a Church which appears to him continually to think of its own organization before thinking of things that really matter? That concerns itself at critical moments of its history with trifles

such as the shape of an alb or the colour of a stole? Of course the Church has lately concerned itself with the troubles of the working people, with what is called "labour unrest," and—to a lesser degree—with the inequalities under which women still labour. It has appointed committees and commissions dealing with these and other questions. Yet somehow these measures seem small and inadequate in view of the real need and of what is happening in these days. Perhaps it is that nothing will really add power to the Church unless it suffers conversion; that sounds a strange thing to say, yet I mean it, and unless from the day of its conversion onwards it quite naturally puts the spiritual needs of the people first and its own organization second.

Many of my readers—and other people too—will feel it is impossible to think otherwise than they have always thought on the subjects of which I have spoken. Why should they change their views, if they bring perhaps both comfort and strength? Why indeed? It has never occurred to me in all my musings to suggest such a thing. What I am sure is now necessary is for the Church to refrain from trying to enforce on those who cannot accept them, its views

on the subjects of Dogma, Episcopacy, and the Priesthood, and certain tests of Churchmanship, and say quite bravely and authoritatively that it no longer intends to do so. There would, I suppose, be danger in this line of action, but are not risks worth taking? It seems to me that life—certainly the Christian life—is an adventure after all, and that life apart from any danger or adventure is a life that is hardly worth living.

Of course such an action would imply great trust in mankind generally, but I for one would not fear this. I do not think clergymen know how vast is the number of non-Church-going Christian men and women. People care, I think, for spiritual life much more than they did ten or fifteen years ago, and as somebody once said to me, it may very well be true, unless a real change comes to the Church, that "before long we shall find it is not only the case of the blind trying to lead the blind," but "the blind trying to lead those *who see*." It comes to me clearly, that if the Church would forego its claim to spiritual power descending upon its dignitaries in a mechanical way,—for although individuals may deny such a claim

is made, its whole system is built on that claim—it would be perhaps the letting go of an anchor that appears to hold the Church in a safe position, but once free the ship would start on a voyage of discovery that would bring it to a rich and fertile land. Of course such an action would call for great faith in God and in humanity. We recognize perhaps our need of faith in God even when we are faithless, but have we sufficiently recognized the absolute need of faith in humanity? Perhaps we shall have to think a little more than we have hitherto done on the divine part of man's nature. I am sure it would help, for when an appeal is made to what is finest in man or child it nearly always gets a response. The Church has emphasized the weakness of man's nature and that he is sinful; the State, I think, by its laws and machinery follows in the same line of thought, and our prison system is founded on believing the worst of people. This seems to me to be just the opposite attitude towards mankind to the attitude Christ adopted. Are we not both in Church and State prone to tie men and women up in rules, regulations—bitter restraint if once they sin just because

instead of believing in the best we always fear the worst in human nature.

That does not seem to be God's way, for Christ acted so differently. It is so easy, so human, to bind with chains and with fetters. We feel that then we know exactly where we are; we can label men and women, which is comforting, it saves trouble, thought, and we can then devote ourselves to organizations and activities. The only trouble is that it appears to be so unlike what Christ did. Moreover, has it worked? With a Church so rent with divisions we may well come to the conclusion that only human means and methods could have brought us to such a pass, torn as we are by demons of dissent. Another way needs to be tried, and we must even be prepared to face the possibility that perhaps this Temple which we thought Divine has after all been made with hands. As I write, a picture comes before my eyes; the story is told in the 8th Chapter of St. Luke, and though the putting of Gospel stories into modern language is not, as a rule, successful, this one, which in this version appeared some time ago in a periodical, is of such great beauty that it needs no

apology. Jesus is talking with an unknown disciple about the men whom they called demoniacs.

"How do you know that they are possessed by demons?" asked Jesus.

"What else could it be?" asked the man. "There are none that can tame them."

"Has any man tried?" asked Jesus

"Yes, Rabbi. They have been bound with chains and fetters. There is one that I saw. He plucked the fetters from him as a child might break a chain of field flowers, then he ran crying into the wilderness and no man dare pass that way now."

Jesus was silent.

After a space the man spoke again, and it was as if he made an excuse. "Rabbi, the demons make the man cut his flesh with stones; men fear to touch him now, he goes naked."

Jesus lifted his eyes to the man's face. "Have men tried only this way to tame him?" he asked.

"What other way is there, Rabbi?"

"There is God's way," said Jesus. "Come, let us try it."

We know the result from St. Luke's

Gospel. The man was found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind."

Is this not a parable for all of us, and for all time?

CHAPTER IX

ON WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY

ABOUT eighteen months ago I entered a church in London one Sunday for Evensong. I was told that a woman was to read the lessons; such an event had not occurred certainly for many centuries. There were those who wondered how the congregation would take it, and even feared that someone would protest aloud against such an unusual proceeding. I did not anticipate this, but thought that a few people would quietly leave the church as a protest. The choir came in, the women all dressed in surplices, wearing a white covering like the headdress of a Red Cross nurse. With them walked the woman who was to read the lessons.

The moment came, and then what had in anticipation appeared remarkable, to some almost *outré*, calling for a protest, suddenly became the most natural thing in the world. No one stirred; everyone

listened while the lessons were read clearly and with sense, and then instead of marvelling at the courage of the vicar who had arranged it, one marvelled that the proceeding was not a more usual one.

Why, I wonder, are women in our Church quite excluded from taking any lead in the services of the Church? The vicar that night preached a brave sermon. He reminded the congregation that for hundreds of years no woman's voice had been heard within that sacred building proclaiming the good tidings. It was, he said, open to people to object, and they had every right to their opinions. But then, he added, if they objected they should call themselves Jews and not Christians.

That certainly was a challenge to the Christians congregated together that evening. Was he right in what he said?

Some little while ago when travelling in America I attended a college chapel at both morning and evening prayer. The services were conducted by a man and a woman, clad alike in black robes. In the morning the man read the service and the woman

preached the sermon; in the evening the arrangement was reversed, the man being in the pulpit, and it appeared perfectly natural and fitting.

It would be interesting, I think, if we could really get the reason given why the fact of a woman leading prayers in a sacred building or indeed preaching is made impossible by Church authorities. Can it really be the teaching of St. Paul? I find it hard to believe this, for if St. Paul's teaching was truly followed in all its details we would surely have a largely celibate clergy. This, of course, is not an exact parallel, but I do not think that any amount of discussion can do away with the fact that according to his teaching the celibate life ranks higher than the married state, and that he does enjoin it on those who care for the things of the Lord just as clearly as he enjoins women to keep silent in the churches. We know that his teaching and instructions are sometimes due to certain conditions of his day. Women were to take no prominent part, for Corinth was a city of infamy, and any publicity laid them open to grave charges; those who cared for the things of the Lord were advised to lead

celibate lives as St. Paul expected the Lord's immediate return. Both instructions were, I think, for *the* time, not for all time.

And clear though the instruction concerning women may sound it is really very far from clear, for in another place he tells the women that when they prophesy in church—and what is that but preaching?—to do so with covered head. The reason given being a mysterious one, "because of the angels." I have not the faintest idea what that means, nor have I ever heard it satisfactorily explained.

Of course, St. Paul's words in the one direction have great weight in this matter, but his further recognition of the value of women prophesying in the Church has been entirely ignored. No, I do not believe that our Church authorities would really look upon that one passage of St. Paul as a final authority in this matter. To what then can we attribute the Church's position?

The Bishop of Exeter the other day said he did not think it would be wrong for a woman to preach in a church provided that only those of her own sex, and children, were

present. Surely it is difficult to grasp that point of view. If a woman can speak of the ways of God, if she has some teaching to impart that will strengthen souls in the battle of life, why should no man be permitted to hear? It is surely a quite unreasonable line to adopt. A strange sex obsession seems to take hold of some men when speaking on this subject that it is impossible to account for, unless it is attributed largely to prejudice. Tradition, of course, does account for the attitude many adopt; it is prejudice that betrays itself when they give reasons to explain their attitude. It was a disappointment to many that the Bishop of Exeter did not explain why no man should be present when a woman carefully chosen preached the word of truth within the walls of a consecrated building.

The present generation do demand that things should be explained. The tiresome "why" with which a child used so often to drive his elders frantic is no longer bullied—as it used to be—out of a child; it remains now persistently through adolescence to the grown-up state, and I feel quite sure the Bishop will need to explain himself

if he wishes his words to have weight and carry conviction.

Life has many little ironies: was it irony, I wonder, that on the very day when the Bishop made this statement in Convocation, a woman, clad in cassock and surplice, was preaching from a pulpit of the Church of England to a large congregation of both men and women?

When now and again I read what Convocation is discussing it is strange how often it seems remote from the actual happenings of the day.

I cannot help feeling quite sure that the idea that no woman should lead in prayer or speak inside a consecrated building is wrong. Many clergymen agree. I wish these men would, instead of waiting for great changes, use the power they possess. Is it not important first to seek to destroy the idea that no woman should read, teach, or pray in a church? There is no reason why women should not read the lessons if the vicar invites them to do so, and this would help to destroy the really terrible idea that a woman may not lead in prayer or exhortation in a consecrated building.

One ecclesiastical dignitary has said that the reason for not permitting this is fundamental, but the present generation press for a clearer explanation and demand to know what is meant by so vague a statement. To exclude women from the ministry of the Church seems to me in opposition to the spirit and attitude of Christ to women. As far as we know to a certainty it was to a woman He first unveiled the mystery of His Incarnation. Women it is true did not partake of the Last Supper, but every one of those who did partake of it failed Him a few hours afterwards. One a deliberate traitor, one a perjurer, all cowards who left Him in His agony, alone. Women alone were faithful. Women alone followed the weary way to the Cross and suffered—ah! who can say what that suffering was!—in His sufferings. To a woman dearly beloved He, on arising that first Easter Day, first revealed the joyous truth of His resurrection, telling her to impart the glad tidings and to pass on the revelation to His disciples; a woman was chosen by Him as a messenger of glad tidings and to strengthen the faith of His disciples.

Is it, then, not passing strange that women should not be permitted to speak of Him, His Truth, His Love within our Church ?

CHAPTER X

ON A FALSE STANDARD

THE thought that women really ought to contribute within the Church their interpretation of Christ's teaching, was brought home to me when not very long ago I heard a sermon preached upon the words spoken to the woman who was taken in the act of sin recorded in the 8th Chapter of St. John's Gospel—"Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." I have heard three sermons preached on the incident recorded here; invariably the preacher enlarges upon the compassion and tenderness of Christ towards the "fallen" woman. I remember one preacher waxing very eloquent upon how much it must have cost Him to speak to such a woman. We were urgently told not to forget this, and the point was dwelt upon at considerable length. It was true that He was tender even to the Magdalene, but He was the Son of God, the sinless one, the essence of purity, and we were told ever to realize the terrible cost it

must have been to Him to speak to one so deeply fallen.

As the preacher spoke, the thought flashed through my mind—did it cost Him more to speak to the woman taken in adultery, than it cost Him to speak to the religious men of His day? As we read His denunciation of the Pharisees—"Woe unto you, hypocrites; woe unto you, blind guides; ye serpents," it is impossible not to feel that He was far more deeply moved by their sin than by the sin of this poor woman, or the Magdalene.

That, however, was not the point upon which I was meditating at the end of the sermon. It was on the strange coincidence that all the three clergymen dwelt upon the same thought when preaching on the event recorded in St. John's Gospel.

Because as I read it, the most dramatic moment of the whole incident, the moment that contains the richest teaching, was when Jesus, looking at the woman's accuser, said, "Let him that is without sin, cast the first stone." He was, I think, referring to the special sin of which she had been guilty, it would have been no challenge at all had He meant—let him that is without *any* sin whatsoever cast the first stone. After He

spoke those words, there must have been a dramatic moment when suddenly the accusers found themselves accused, followed by silence—a long silence—as they went out one by one, " beginning at the oldest even unto the last " !

In Christ's words to them, and in what followed, lies so great a wealth of teaching that I am continually astonished that preachers almost invariably pass it over, and dwell upon Christ's words to the woman.

Does He not, by His actions and His words, teach here that sin is sin, whether committed by man or woman? As the accusers walked out one by one, in His sight they shared her guilt, yet she alone is forgiven, for she alone was conscious of sin.

The teaching about unrepentant fornication and fornicators in the Bible is clear and incisive ; there is no beating about the bush, they have their part in the lake which burneth—which is the second death ; they are classed with dogs and sorcerers who cannot enter the city of God.

Just because it is so clear, is it not strange that the teaching within the Church is so vague, indecisive, and inconsistent ? The

world in general has accepted—and still in spite of general expert opinion on the subject, to a certain extent accepts the belief that continence is harmful to the health of a man. To put it plainly, that fornication is necessary for his physical well-being and mental clarity. I wish we could think that the Church, realizing that sin could never make for good, has led the way in showing that Christ's teaching is the only guide in this matter, and the only path to health and well-being. But no; it is being left to the medical profession to reveal this truth. The Church has in the main acquiesced in the popular belief and then—and this is surely the acme of inconsistency—stigmatized as "fallen" those women who have provided what was considered necessary to man's well-being.

That is the greatest puzzle of all. On one hand to acquiesce in the assertion that a certain need is essential to man's well-being—on the other to relegate to depths of degradation those who provide that need.

As far as I can see, non-Christian nations—such as the Japanese—are far more consistent, and far more honourable in their attitude on this subject. They have accepted the same line of thought, that continence is

harmful to man's well-being—or at any rate have done so until quite recently—but then they have given a place of honour to those who provide that which is a necessity to man, and the women are not spoken of as fallen, or looked upon as those who have reached special depths of degradation, but given a place of honour. Surely that is consistent and right; those who provide what is necessary to man's well-being and mental clarity, should be treated with honour. We now know that there is no necessity, yet the Church by its silence on the subject and its attitude towards it has accepted to a large extent the world's way of thinking as to man's necessity, and then, to show its disapproval of sin, treated those who provided the necessity as "fallen," and as a special class of sinners. It is an inconsistency the present generation cannot understand.

Is not this one of the subjects in which the Church has gone astray, for lack of the woman's mind contributing her conception of Christ's teaching within the Church? If three women were chosen, women consecrated to God in their hearts, and with a message on their lips, to preach on the incident recorded in St. John's Gospel, I

cannot think all three would choose as her text, Christ's words to the woman, and dwell upon His tenderness towards one who was so great a sinner.

The continual emphasis in sex matters on woman's sinfulness by the Church, has set up, I think, a false standard, and though no one wishes to condone the woman's sin, or to pretend that men alone are the tempters—which is far from true—yet by continual emphasis on the woman's side, man has almost forgotten that in Christ's eyes he with the woman is an equal sinner. No, some if not all would, I think, see that our Lord's teaching is that what is sin is sin whether committed by man or woman. Those only, said Christ, who kept themselves pure could cast the first stone, knowing as He did that those who were utterly pure would have no stones to cast.

CHAPTER XI

ON SERMONS

MY mind is running on sermons generally just now, not on any special one. I am well aware how easy it is to criticize, and how cruel the criticism can be, and that those who criticize would probably do no better. There is, however, this to be said for those who criticize : they lay no claim to special grace, as does the Church for its ordained ministers.

The pulpit has, of course, greatly improved during the past twenty years, and friends of mine tell me it has enormously improved in the past fifty years. That is, the general level of preaching is higher than it was, although possibly we lack outstanding preachers. There is, however, room for much improvement ; those who live in large cities, and can more or less choose which church in which to worship, realize little, I think, what is the average standard of sermons.

While there are those who have a message

to give so full of life and truth, that the listeners seem to be lifted into the very arms of God, and leave the church strengthened for the battle of life; others who having a different gift do by their teaching reveal Christian Truth and mentally guide the spirit life, yet I am sure it will be admitted that the general standard of sermons is low.

Our clergy are, as a rule, overworked, and small blame to them if under present conditions sufficient time for the preparation of sermons can hardly be found. Yet something needs to be done, for if men and women are to look to the Church for spiritual food the pulpit must be more alive than it is to-day.

There are some people who say that preaching is no longer needed. They are, I think, yielding when they say this to very superficial thought. The statement is generally based on the fact that churches are not in the main well attended. When, however, a man appears with something to say, who seems to have a message of life, it has often appeared to me quite touching how people flock to listen to that which they believe will unveil the things of God and help the religious life.

No, I am quite certain that if in the main our pews are empty it is because people so often find that after they have occupied them they come empty away.

It is, I think, well that the pew should sometimes have an opportunity of speaking on religious matters as well as the pulpit, for it often suffers, and have not those who suffer the right to make themselves heard? The question arises whether suffering that is preventable should be quietly acquiesced in.

Many people have rejected good George Herbert's advice, that whenever the sermon is quite impossible, let God take a text and preach patience. And are they not right to reject it? I am not at all sure that God wants people to be patient under certain conditions. I have often thought that if we were really great and good we would rise in our seats in church many a time and walk out, as a protest against the conventional nonsense that is sometimes preached in the name of Christ, or the blatant Erastianism, which many a clergyman either honestly believes in or preaches in order to stand well with the powers that be.

But no, we sit, we middle-aged and

elderly people, and say to ourselves that it does not matter when we hear what we know to be untrue, even non-Christian, and that we must be patient; or we bolster ourselves up with a positive feeling of virtue in listening sometimes to what we know to be untrue and pernicious. It is not an easy thing to protest in any form, so we salve our consciences by saying that we submit to it as an example.

An example of what, I wonder? It seems to me that the result of this attitude can only have a harmful effect upon the younger generation, to whom middle-aged church-people are so anxious to set an example. The young people of to-day are not blind. They know what is Christian—even if they do not follow it—and what is not. What is spiritual, and what is material is quickly detected by the average man and woman; more unerringly so, I think, than twenty years ago. So when we older ones sit so often patiently listening to what we know is neither Christian nor true, which is frequently done for sake of example, must not the effect be to lead the younger generation to feel that we have no sense of spiritual values? Instead then of being an example the younger ones would wish to follow, they

look upon us as being either insincere or stupid; instead of helping or influencing them, as we pathetically wish, do we not, by that very determination to set an example, destroy what little influence in Church matters we might otherwise possess?

Yes, the only way, I am convinced, of being loyal to the Church is to be true to the Spirit. How often are we urged to be loyal to the Church, but, as a rule, those who urge it are, it seems to me, claiming loyalty not to the Catholic Church, but to the tyranny of observance. Those who sit in the pew suffer much, specially women, first of all because they sit more persistently; secondly, because they are invariably instructed by men, many of whom have little comprehension of them or their needs.

I recall to mind a certain occasion when an anniversary service for young women was held in an immense church. The church was crowded, the whole atmosphere pulsating with young life and latent possibilities. It was a great opportunity to arouse enthusiasm for the service of Christ, and to claim young lives for Him. The preacher chosen was an old man who had spent all his life as a missionary in Africa. To this day I remember his sermon, and almost

weep as I wept then. It was one great eulogy of the mid-Victorian age. He ventured to predict that when the people of to-day emerged from the present fever, and calmly reviewed history, they would realize that, after all, our grand-parents had trod a higher path than we were doing in these days, etc.

It would be impossible to describe the effect (of which happily the dear man seemed entirely unconscious) of that sermon. The church was packed by those who really had come seeking help and guidance in difficult days—they went disappointed and hungry away. I then tried to imagine how a vast congregation say of undergraduates would have behaved had a little old lady entered the pulpit, and preached the same kind of sermon to them. Would they have endured patiently, as did that other congregation, unto the end ? I hardly think so, and perhaps they would have been right not to endure. It was not the fact that the preacher was old that mattered. Age is often beautiful ; and when it is so, the young will ever listen with gratitude. It was the preacher's utter lack of comprehension that was the tragedy, his entire inability to realize the latent possibilities

and idealism with which he was confronted ; it is that lack of comprehension that women, both young and old, so often come up against in the pulpit, and they are therefore slipping away one by one from the Church.

Till recently, women went to church, first because it was expected ; secondly, because not being independent it was not so easy to rebel. I wonder if clergymen realize that this independence of women will, unless the Church is really going to meet their needs, empty the churches. Do they realize how many women—daughters at home—went to church in days gone by because the head of the family expected them to do so and it was not easy to abstain ? I call to mind one dear old Colonel, the kindest man in all the world, with six daughters. It would not have been possible for any one of those six daughters to abstain from going to church on Sunday morning. All that is passing away, has indeed to a large extent passed, and now if women go to church, it will only be because their own desires lead them there, and they find in it the strength they need.

Will they do so ?

Not, I fear, unless the Church alters greatly. Individuals are, of course, here and

there to blame—for instance, I am acquainted with a clergyman who frequently has not the smallest idea what he is going to say until he gets into the pulpit—but on the whole it seems as though the system of one man being compelled to be preacher, organizer, administrator all in one, is at fault.

Could not the Church see its way to having an Order of Preachers, both men and women? It will be said that the example given in this chapter is an exceptional one; that I willingly admit—though even as I write these words other instances very much like it flash through my mind—it was exceptional, and though it is not fair to quote such instances as though they were general, it is impossible to ignore them.

I have said women suffer from such sermons more than men, because at present they attend the Church services in much greater numbers. As a rule the proportion of men and women in church on Sunday mornings is something like twelve women to one man. Those of our menfolk who attend regularly are naturally never present when there are services—as there very frequently are—for women only. I repeat, and thankfully repeat, that the example

given is an exceptional one, yet not quite so exceptional as we would like to think.

Of course, if women preached there would be failures also. Who would doubt it ? Yet their complete exclusion must be a weakness, and if an order of preachers including both men and women were created the pulpits of our Church might become a power in the land.

CHAPTER XII

ON MORNING PRAYER

WERE the children of thirty years ago or so, anything like so free with and informing to their elders as children are nowadays? I have many nephews and nieces, and find their attitude towards me is entirely different from my attitude as a child, in the dim past, to my aunts and uncles. My small people are extraordinarily informing, and, moreover, treat me entirely as an equal, which ought perhaps to have a humiliating effect upon me.

I have in mind two small nephews, one twelve, the other ten years of age. When taken to church, they are never told to listen to the sermon, and later on to give a digest of it. Nevertheless, they usually listen with the deepest interest, and instead of shying from the subject afterwards, are very ready to talk, say what they think about it, and even criticize.

That seems a somewhat unfitting occupation for such young people, yet it is, I am sure, all to the good. They are naturally interested and want to think things out. I remember being distinctly shocked at the nephew aged ten remarking that he did not like the Psalms for the day because they were so "swanky." We had read the 26th Psalm. Phrases such as, "I have walked in my integrity," "I have not sat with vain persons," "I have walked in the Truth," "I have hated the congregation of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked," etc., jarred upon him, and in repeating them to me in each case he put a slight emphasis upon the *I*, doing so with a touch of scorn for one who was so satisfied with himself.

The small boy had listened with sense, and the Psalmist's complacency with himself had evidently shocked his sense of what is right in the sight of God. He thought it unfitting that such sentiments should be voiced in public worship.

And now I have to make a confession. It is that I have come to the conclusion that my nephew of ten years is right, and the

Church quite wrong, in allowing our liturgy to continue in its present form, for there are other Psalms that violate one's sense of what is just and right to a far greater extent than the 26th.

It is not on account of children, however, that I am sure the small creature aged ten is right, and that the time has come when there must be a change in our liturgy. Men have returned in millions to England. We are often told that they return having faced realities and found a deeper meaning in life. Doubtless this is true. It is true also of millions of women and girls who during the past five years have not only lived through sorrow, but who in the wider spheres of service into which they have entered, have found an independence and new meaning in life hitherto unrealized.

It is a kind of beginning again, I think, of the men and women of the country; perhaps I ought to say of boys and girls, for our returning army is very, very young, as is the great majority of women and girls in the industrial world. They are beginning life again at a very impressionable time.

I have been speaking to numbers of them,

and I see that they not only stand in need of spiritual help, but that they are in a pathetic way conscious of this need. They are not more religious than they were, but they are *awakened*.

Most of them seldom went to church in pre-war days, and have no decided intention to alter this even now, but lately they have been wandering occasionally into our churches in search of some help. Many of the Psalms and Old Testament lessons are not at all helpful, to say the least. Men and women listen to a liturgy that they find difficult to understand, but even more than that, when they do understand, it seems to me they have first to practise deliberate insincerity, if they follow the services intelligently, and, secondly, that they receive a false idea as to the character of God.

Both these facts trouble me, for I am paralysed by them just at the moment when I want to urge many who speak to me, not to forsake the Church into which they have been baptized.

I wonder if I am right in thinking that anyone following Morning Prayer with feeling and intelligence is bound to practise

a form of insincerity that must be very harmful to the spirit? At Morning Prayer we begin, as it seems most fitting to do, with the Confession, appearing penitently in the presence of God, and confess our wrongdoing. We are then reminded in the Absolution that all is forgiven those who repent, and quite naturally we rise from our knees with joy in our hearts and on our lips. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord," is just what one would naturally sing when a real sense of pardon is experienced. Then comes the Te Deum. We may not understand it, but, at any rate, joy again is the dominant note, and fittingly so to those who really feel sin is pardoned. Thus far all seems real, but—and this always saddens me—the Te Deum is followed by the Litany, and in a few moments we are on our knees expressing misery again. This seems to me unreal. How can we be in the attitude of penitence again so quickly if we really believed in the forgiveness promised in the Absolution, as we certainly appear to do when we burst into Psalms of thanksgiving?

The immediate following of the Litany always distresses me. It is unreal.

If we feel forgiven, and enter into the songs of thanksgiving and praise, is it not too great a demand not only upon our emotions, but upon our sense of truth to fall back again immediately into the penitent attitude of unpardoned sinners?

Indeed, it seems an insult to a loving God, whose absolution and forgiveness had but a few moments ago been pronounced by the minister.

The Litany is, of course, meant to be taken as a separate service, but in a vast number of country churches it is read for three Sundays every month at Morning Prayer, and those who go to church suffer things as they are, not as they are meant to be, so the worshipper who follows the service with intelligence and feeling is compelled to be insincere in emotion and thought.

Our Liturgy is beautiful, and has deep historic interest, but if the aim of worship is that the spiritual life of the worshipper should be strengthened and intelligent adoration offered to God, ought not we—we mere lay people—to urge that the present arrangement should be altered

speedily, so that the young men and women may to-day understand its meaning, and enter into a true spirit of worship with sincerity and truth, which is, I think, not possible at present.

A Church Committee, I am told, has been sitting for many years—fourteen years, I think—with this object in view. Not much, in spite of that length of time, has been achieved.

We are not now quite as hide-bound as we were, and individual clergymen could do much (a few, very few, have done much) to omit certain parts and to alter the Liturgy, so that it could be understood by the people and anomalies removed. It needs courage, perhaps, to do this, and there would always be a few in the congregation who would object. But is not courage needed in all paths of life, and is the Church any exception? In the few cases where intelligent changes have been made, it has to my knowledge brought a deeper sense of reality into Church life and worship.

Men and women do, I think, long to worship in sincerity and truth, and may it not be that many keep away from church

because, as things now are, they find it difficult to achieve this in the Anglican Church ?

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE COMMANDMENTS

IN America the Episcopal Church, instead of reading the Ten Commandments in its Liturgy, reads the two Christian Commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is also done occasionally, but only occasionally in England; would that it could become more universal.

Is not the aim of a true Christian through prayers, faith, and service, to become more God-like day by day? Therefore it is important that we should have a right idea as to what God is like, some idea of His true character, because it is, of course, impossible to seek to be conformed to His image, unless we have a right conception of that image.

The Ten Commandments do, I think,

distinctly give a wrong idea of God. The writer had, of course, no Christian conception of Him, and as I hear them I always have the feeling that he half believed in a number of gods, but was sure that his special one was the best of them all. The conceptions expressed in some of the Commandments are very primitive, also the reasons given—such as the one in the fifth Commandment for obeying. "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," is surely simply immoral. Let us imagine an intelligent being listening for the first time to the Ten Commandments. What is the idea of God that he would carry away with him?

First, I think, that God is not only jealous, but actively vindictive to those who do not love Him. "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, nor in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down or worship them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto

the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me, and show mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My Commandments."

The impression given in the second Commandment is that He is positively vindictive to those who do not love Him. We have got so accustomed to hearing the Commandments that it is almost impossible to listen to them afresh or with the ears of those who are not familiar with them. Frankly, I find it more and more painful to listen to the Commandments. It seems to me as though God were being maligned in His own house and no one to take His side. I almost wonder at times that someone knowing Him, and loving Him, does not quietly protest against the false presentation of Him in the Communion Service.

The Commandments give such a different idea of God from that presented to us by Christ, and on hearing them I can only comfort myself by dwelling upon the words that fell from the lips of Jesus about the Father, giving not only a different but an entirely contrary idea of God to that presented in the second Commandment. In the Commandment we are told, The

Lord thy God is a jealous God, and He visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third or fourth generation of them that hate Him and showeth mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His Commandments. It may be said that psychologically there is here a germ of truth. Whether that is true or not I can give no opinion, but the whole seems to me just contrary to the teaching of Christ, Who, speaking of the Father, says "He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and the good." There is no thought of that here; in the second Commandment we are given to understand that God only loves those who love Him. Again the words of Christ come to me. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye, do not even the publicans the same?" It pains many people to hear the Ten Commandments; not that they do not need to be reminded of them—this could be done by reading the first sentence of each only—but because they give a wrong idea of God, not a Christian idea at all.

Then again a lack of sincerity creeps in—as in our Liturgy. We listen calmly to the command that our servants shall do

"no manner of work"; we pray humbly that we may be inclined to keep the law, and go forthwith back to our homes where the servants accomplish very nearly—not quite—the work they usually get through on week-days; there is no attempt at demanding "no manner of work."

All these insincerities are detected by children and others as well, and the service becomes quite unreal. They hardly know where they are and what it is all about. Christianity teaches us to honour women, but in church children get accustomed to hearing a man's house put first. They notice these things, let no one suppose it does not matter.

The wording of the tenth Commandment, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his wife, nor his ox, nor his ass, or anything that is his, distinctly gives the idea that a man's property is of more value to him than is his wife, that property is of greater value than life, a sentiment entirely out of harmony with Christian teaching which can be accepted by no one, man or woman.

Apart from what has been said, the atmosphere of the Ten Commandments is negative, and gives the feeling, the deaden-

ing feeling, that God's commands are negative only, and as long as we abstain from certain sins all is well. The idea of a Christian's life is largely a life of abstaining from certain evils, a case of religious observances; the giving of one-tenth of one's income to charity which was taught by the past generation was surely founded on the commandments of Moses and not on the teaching of Jesus. The Christian Commandments are positive and begin with "Thou shalt." Regular churchgoers are so accustomed to the Ten Commandments, and perhaps have so sure an inner knowledge of what God is, that the incomplete presentation of Him in the Ante-Communion Service can have no effect. My thoughts, however, go to the many who now are seeking enlightenment, who are not regular churchgoers, and who need to be taught the beauty and strength of corporate worship, who feel rightly that worship apart from sincerity is impossible.

The war brought us many evils; to many it has knocked the bottom out of life, but one good thing which I think it has brought is an intense desire for sincerity. We must, we can, no longer say things, no longer acquiesce in things we do not believe. Here,

again, the lay mind comes in. Changes, I think, will have to be made, just because lay people will no longer be able to tolerate corporate worship which violates their sense of the beauty and truth of God.

CHAPTER XIV

ON READING IN CHURCH

SOME time ago a passage of the Bible was read on the stage in a certain play. It was part of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The way it was read brought out the matchless beauty of the passage, the audience went away, most of them not knowing where it came from but deeply impressed with the beauty of its diction. We seldom hear the Bible read with that result in church.

A clergyman of my acquaintance used to read the service and lessons in such a way that it was literally impossible to understand what he said.

It was very puzzling, for in ordinary conversation he was quite distinct in utterance. It was only when he opened a Prayer Book or a Bible that he became unintelligible. He seemed positively to practise reading in such a way that he could not be understood. I sometimes wondered if he had Romeward tendencies and resented reading the services in the vulgar tongue, wishing

all the while he could do so in a tongue not understood by the people. This, however, did not seem a satisfactory explanation, for he showed no other tendencies toward Rome. I never knew him well enough to ask him why he seemed to practise indistinctness the moment he opened a Bible: the fact always remained, that whenever he opened it he mumbled in such a way that no one could understand him, and I came to the conclusion that for some reason that could not be fathomed he did not wish to be heard.

This kind of address would be tolerated nowhere outside the walls of a church. A public lecturer is shouted at if he is inaudible; a barrister is quickly reminded of the fact should he fall into indistinctness by both jury and judge. Clergy alone sin in this way unrebuked.

It may, of course, be unreasonable for a laywoman to desire first to hear what is said and further to desire passionately that what is heard within the church should be clear, sensible, and beautiful. But if so it is, I am sure, an unreasonableness that is shared by a vast number of laymen. Would it not be possible to organize Church ministry so that those who cannot make

themselves heard in the church where they minister should do parochial work only? Of course, in country places this might not always be possible; in towns, however, it could so be arranged if those in authority saw the necessity of such an arrangement and were prepared for changes. It is heart-breaking to hear matchless passages of the Bible mauled and robbed of their beauty and sense by the indifferent manner in which they are often read. Heart-breaking, because instead of revealing the inspired message, indifferent and careless reading positively conceals it. Is not the reading of the Word of God as solemn an undertaking as the preaching of a sermon? And when well read has it not often a message more real than many a sermon? The verdict of the laity, when what they think really matters, will, I am sure, be that those who cannot read—and there are many—should be given other work to do.

Of course, when the reader is unable to make himself heard it is not always to be regretted. For instance, on the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity the first lesson is as follows: "Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria." A plot is disclosed of Jehu and his followers; the lesson continues,

at the seventh verse : " And it came to pass that they took the king's sons and slew them, even seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets and sent them to him (Jehu) in Jezreel. And there came a messenger and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the king's sons. And he said, Lay them in ten heaps and at the entering of the gate until the morning. . . . So Jehu smote all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel and all his great men and his familiar friends and his priests until he had left him none remaining." And so to yet further bloodshed, continuing in the same strain to the end of the lesson.

It is intolerable that such barbaric tales of Eastern horror should be read in church. Is it possible for man, woman, or child to gain anything worth gaining by listening to accounts of such unrelieved brutality read in isolated passages apart from the whole historic teaching? It is my experience that children *do* listen to the lessons, and whereas such a story probably passes over the head of a child of six or seven, to the child of eleven or twelve the story of the baskets of heads is one of haunting horror. An acquaintance of mine,

no longer a child, remembers those baskets of heads and bits of Robinson Crusoe "as the most terrifying stories ever any child heard." We object to cinemas where horrors are portrayed, and read in church passages like the above without a qualm, though to the imaginative they present a picture of horror far more ghastly than is portrayed in any Greek drama.

If our clergy had either the courage or intelligence *en masse* to omit such passages and read something else instead in spite of the lectionary, how grateful we should be! One's whole being, all one's sense of reverence, rebels against hearing such passages read. But, for ever and ever, the clergy continue in the well-worn unthought-out ruts, and, as a rule, fear to bring, or are unable to bring, a glimmer of their own intelligence upon the matter. It is true that a new lectionary has been published—but how often is it used?

Let me give another example. This one not an example of horror but one which merely indicates lack of thought.

Christmas Day is one of the most joyful if not *the* most joyful festival of the year—and does not the feeling of joy always possess the worshipper on that day at

Morning Prayer? The lesson is in Isaiah IX. and when the opening verses of the lesson are read the feeling of joy is clouded. The Authorized Version, which is always read, of the first few verses is unintelligible, and we are told that God has *not* increased our joy. Looking at the Revised Version you see that exactly the opposite is stated; the difference of the passages in the Authorized and Revised Versions is so striking that I will put the two passages in parallel columns.

AUTHORIZED VERSION	REVISED VERSION
Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. . . . Thou hast multiplied the nation, and *not* increased the joy, etc.	But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he hath made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. . . . Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou *hast* increased their joy, etc.

I have emphasized two words; every Christmas Day the reading of the Authorized Version brings a jarring note into the passage, and it should not be there. Anyone reading the two passages will see that one is unintelligible and charged with gloom, the other intelligible and full of hope.

Yet in such a rut, such a groove do men move that only once have I ever heard the Revised Version read on Christmas morning; the other unintelligible gloom is droned out Christmas Days in succession though the clergyman, if he is alive and intelligent, must know of the difference in the Revised Version. Even as I write these words I pause—and wonder how many of them are aware of it after all.

The layman pleads for more intelligent reading—further, that the vicar should be brave and omit unsuitable passages even if they are the appointed lesson of the day.

CHAPTER XV

ON THE MEANING OF WORDS, AND THE SNARE OF BEAUTY

THE language of our Liturgy is the language of several hundred years ago, so it is, of course, not surprising that many of its phrases are not only not understood but actually misunderstood. One of the Archbishop's Committees has, I know, brought out an excellent report on this subject, but years may elapse between the issuing of a report and anything being done. The question, I think, is whether it is right to wait *any* longer without insisting in some cases on alterations, both verbally and in the manner of expression.

We pray in the Liturgy that the King may be granted "health and *wealth*." How many, I wonder, hearing the prayer are amazed that prayer should be publicly offered for money on behalf of the King. An agricultural labourer was heard murmuring "it's not 'e as wants the money, it's the likes o' us." The old Saxon word

wealth meant, of course, " well-being " ; the meaning, however, has entirely changed in the common language of to-day, and by using the old word we give the idea that in the midst of all the industrial upset, poverty and distress, the Church is concerned that the King at least should be rich ! " Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings," is, indeed, a stupendous petition ! The word " prevent " has but one meaning now, to stop, to check ; so we solemnly ask that we may be stopped " in all our doings." It seems to me to have the appearance of attributing to God the same spirit that animates the tyrant, who sends a messenger to " see what Tommy is doing and tell him he is not to." Would it be too revolutionary if the petitioner began " Go before us, O Lord, in all our doings," and so gave the true sense of the word ? The language of our Liturgy may be old-fashioned and not easily understood by all, but its beauty and its phrasing and diction are beyond all compare. This is often said by those who object to any change whatsoever, and it is perfectly true. And yet it is, I think, just here that a danger lies—its very beauty becomes a snare. Let me explain what I mean. I do not wish to imply that

the instance given is a common one, but it is commoner than many people realize.

In a certain village for many years the clergymen had read the services in so slovenly and careless a manner that by degrees the church became more and more empty. It was not a case of occasional careless reading, the services were never read in any other manner.

One or two remained faithful in spite of the fact that the feelings of reverence were continually outraged and the services became almost a torture.

During the war one of these faithful ones lost his two and only sons and then it was that somehow what he had suffered so long became unbearable. Turning naturally to the services of the Church for comfort he was in his sorrow more sensitive than usual to the utter irreverent and careless way in which they were conducted, and he wrote to his bishop imploring him to remonstrate with the vicar and beg him to mend his ways.

In due course came the reply, and it was in the Bishop's reply that one saw how the very beauty of our Liturgy becomes a snare.

The letter was courteous and sympathetic, but its gist was that the sufferer

must remember the beauty of the service; he was reminded that in this lay the strength of the Anglican Church, that its Liturgy is incomparable and no one could rob it of its beauty. In a brief but courteous note the Bishop indicated that he would do nothing at all and took refuge in the beauty of the Prayer Book. It does seem to me, it is just here that the very beauty of our Liturgy becomes a snare. What the Bishop said of its beauty is true. What he said about the impossibility of robbing it of its beauty is, I am sure, quite untrue. Every sensitive soul knows that irreverent and slovenly reading *can* rob our Liturgy of its beauty, and its very beauty becomes a weapon to hinder intelligent and reverent worship, when used as a shield to excuse slovenly and indifferent reading. Does not the vitality of Church life and worship depend on the way in which the services are conducted? It is not only the poorness of sermons, indeed that seems to me the lesser evil of the two, but the monotony and incomprehensibleness of the services to which the empty churches is due. I remember that Balzac, in his *Country Doctor*, says: "A religion is the very heart of a nation: it expresses their feelings and their thoughts, and

exalts them by giving them an object ; but unless outward and visible honour is paid to God, religion cannot exist, and as a consequence, human ordinances lose all their force." In the manner by which the Liturgy is often read there is no outward or visible honour paid to God, how then can real worship exist ?

Those who live in cities will perhaps hardly realize the importance of the layman's plea that careless and indifferent reading when it is continuous should somehow not be permitted. City dwellers can choose the church in which they worship ; those who live in villages have but one to which they can go, and they often suffer much. If parishes had some voice in the choice of their incumbent, and insisted on his being able to read clearly, distinctly, and with sense, careless and indifferent reading would, I think, vanish.

CHAPTER XVI

ON ORDINARY PEOPLE AND THE CHURCH

THE teaching that was so much to the fore in the past generation that man is essentially worthless, that in himself he can do nothing pleasing to God has had, I am sure, to some extent an evil effect.

Are not men and women very much what they are told they are? Emphasize that a man has no strength, that he is worthless and he is very likely to become so. I have lived for several years amongst the Eurasians in India, and am quite sure that the cruel and untrue saying that they have the vices of both nations and the virtues of neither has done much to lower the standard of their ideals, and helped to make them an unsatisfactory community. So it is, I think, with all human nature; to insist on the weakness and worthlessness of mankind has a devastating effect—that is, if it is credited, which to a large extent in these days it is not.

No, man is made in the image of God, and

Christ with His own lips tells us that the kingdom of heaven is within.

I have heard clergymen argue that if the laity had more power in the Church disastrous results would probably follow, as it would then be captured by the godless and indifferent, the assumption always being that men in the aggregate are inherently evil, and that the first effort they would make if power were put in their hands, would be to capture the Church for material purposes—as though there was no materialism in the Church to-day.

Those who have faith in God must have faith in the works of His hand, and refuse to believe that human nature is bad; refuse to judge mankind by the lowest estimation. If the Church is to stand for all that is high, Christian, and true, why think that mankind will be opposed to it? It is because the Church has so often *not* stood for these things that men and women are turning away from it. Man is indeed imperfect, and falls short, but the creation of God's hands cannot, it seems to me, be inherently evil, and the imperfection cannot be realized until after the ideal is seen. It is the attitude of the Church to trust only those laymen who are

ecclesiastically minded; it has been said again and again that the laymen chosen for the House of Laymen are more ecclesiastically minded than the Bishops themselves. Is it too much to plead for confidence in the ordinary layman, in the type of man who would rebel if Convocation spent time during industrial unrest and spiritual upheaval in discussing whether the clergyman in a particular service should "wear either a surplice with stole, or with scarf and hood, or a white alb plain with a vestment or cape, subject to conditions and safeguards"? This was discussed at length not long ago at a most critical time of the Church's history, and so great was its importance considered to be that it was postponed several months for further consideration. Would it not be well to have laymen guiding in Church affairs who would see life bigger than this? Laymen who by their lives show a desire for the service of God and for the coming of His Kingdom, who being baptized members of the Church have no special ecclesiastical qualifications and do not desire them? It may be found that they will be more prone to trust to the guidance of the Spirit, less prone to trust in tests, ecclesiastical

order, and verbal statements than the ecclesiastically-minded man.

And is it not just this that is needed to-day? Ecclesiastical authorities *are* tied on every side by tests, order, and hampering traditions, the laity, except the very few, are not so tied. Let the authorities at this time call, and call in faith and hope, to the real Church—the laity—to destroy, reform, rebuild; there may be fear of chaos, but chaos cannot follow if there is trust in the Spirit of God, which has ever gone with man, and will go with him from Time to Eternity.

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